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EXCISE

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ACTION SS 25

INFO SSO 00,NSCE 00,CCO 00,/025 W

Z R 041110Z SEP 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 6179
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 4104
CINCPAC FOR POLAD
AMEMBASY VIENTIANE 2413

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Jean Izenberg DATE 12/24/81
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 SAIGON 4885

EXDIS

SUBJECT: VIETNAM ELECTION RETURNS: PRELIMINARY COMMENT ON ELECTION RETURNS

1. THE RESULTS, AS OF 1600 SEPTEMBER 4, WITH 42 OF THE 50 ELECTORAL JURISDICTIONS HAVING REPORTED, THIEU-KY HAD 35 PERCENT OF THE VOTE. TRUONG DINH DZU WAS IN SECOND PLACE WITH 17.4 PERCENT, FOLLOWED BY HUONG (11.7 PERCENT), SUU (9.7 PERCNET) AND HA THUC KY (7 PERCENT). AS EXPECTED, THIEU-KY DID ESPECIALLY WELL IN II CORPS,

(1)

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PARTICULARLY IN THE HIGHLAND PROVINCES. THEY ALSO DID QUITE WELL IN POPULOUS IV CORPS, TAKING EVERY PROVINCE EXCEPT KIEN PHONG. DZU WAS STRONGEST IN III AND IV CORPS. HE WON BY PLURALITY IN KIEN PHONG, NAU NGHIA, DING DUONG AND TAY NINH.

2. SUU DID BEST IN I COPS WHERE HE TOOK HUE AND DANANG AND ALSO DID QUITE WELL IN QUANG NAM. THIEU AND KY DID

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NOT DO PARTICULARLY WELL IN I CORPS ALTHOUGH RETURNS FROM QUANG NGAI, WHICH HAVENOT YET COME IN, MAY ALTER THISPICUTRE SOMEWHAT.

3. SUU AND HUONG DID SURPRISELY POORLY IN IV CORPS. SUU GOT 90,391 VOTES. HUONG 119,227; DZU 303,436; THIEU 495,572.) HUONG MADE HIS MOST IMPRESSIVE SHOWING IN SAIGON WHERE HE WON BY PLURALITY OF 137,962 VOTES AGAINST 135,527 FOR THIEU AND 87,670 FOR DZU.

4. FACTORS BEHIND THE THIEU-KY VICTORY:

A. THIEU-KY WERE THE BEST KNOWN OF THE CANDIDATES. KY IN PARTICULAR IS KNOWN IN THECOUNTRYSIDE, WHERE HE IS SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS MR. MOUSTACHE. THE CAMPAIGN WAS EVIDENTLY NEIGHER LONG ENOUGH NOR INTENSIVE

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ENOUGH FOR THE OTHER CANDIDATES TO ERASE THIS ADVANTAGE.

B. THIEU-KY BENEFITED FROM THE TRADITIONAL ATTITUDE TOWARD THOSE IN AUTHORITY. THE TENDENCY ON THE PART OF MANY VOTERS IS TO CAST A "STAY-OUT-OF-TROUBLE-VOTE", THAT IS, THEY DO WHAT THEY BELIEVE THE AUTHORITIES WANT THEM TO DO IN ORDER TO AVOID POSSIBLE FUTURE DIFFICULTIES. THIS VOTE IS PROBABLY A GOOD DEAL SMALLER THAN IT WAS A FEW YEARS AGO, BUT IT IS STILL SIGNIFICANT, PARTICULARLY IN RURAL AREAS.

C. AS ANTICIPATED, A NUMBER OF ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS VOTED MORE OR LESS AS UNITS FOR THE PRESENT REGIME. THIS IS BECAUSE THEIR LEADERS BELIEVE THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT OFFERS THEBEST HOPE OF CONTINUED BENEFITS FOR THEIR PARTICULAR GROUP. INCLUDED IN THIS CATEGORY ARE-THE MONTAGNARDS, THEE KHMERS, THE NORTHERNCATHOLICSBN THE TAM CHAU BUDDHISTS, A LARGE CHUNK OF THE HOA HAO (THOUGH DZU CUT INTO THE HOA HAO VOTE), AND THE MILITARY. EXPECTED TO BE IN THIS CATEGORY BUT NOTABLE FOR THEIR DEFECTION WERE THE CHINESE. THE CHINESE VOTE APPARENTLY WENT MORE

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FOR HUONG THAN FOR TH EU-KY, POSSBILY BECAUSE ES

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MAJOR CSS OBSERVED, THEY STILL REMEMBER THE TA VINH AFFAIR.

D. THOSE WHO FEER CHANGE AND HOPE FOR E CONTINUATION OF THE RELATIVE STABILITY OF THE TH EUEKY REG ME GAVE THEIR SUPPORT TO THE THIEU TICKET. (THESE VOTERS IN MANY CASES WOULD ALSO FALL UNDER THOSE INCLUDED IN (C) ABOVE, HOWEVER.)

E. THE CIVILIAN CANDIDATES PLIT THE VOTE. BY FAILING TO UNITE BEHIND ONE OR TWO CANDIDATES, THEY CONTRIBUTED HEAVILY TO THE THIEU-KY VICTORY. (SHOULD BE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT IT WOULD TAKE THE COMBINED DZU, HUONG, AND SUU VOTE TO BETTER THE THIEU-KY MARK.)

F. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF DZU, THE CIVILIAN CANDIDATES DID NOT EXPLOIT THE ISSUES WITH THE GREATEST APPEAL. FOR THE MOST PART THEY TOOK A RESPONSIBLE STANCE ON THE PEACE ISSUE STRESSING THE NEED FOR PEACE IN HONOR AND GSARANTEES FOR INDEPENDENCE. THIS TURNED OUT TO BE LESS ATTRACTIVE-OR AT LEAST LESS UNDERSTANDABLE -TO MANY VOTERSTHAN THE SIMPLISTIC PEACE APPEAL OF DZU. THE CIVILIAN CANDIDATES ALSO FAILED TO EXPLOIT TH CORRUPTION ISSUE EFFECTIVELY. INSTEAD OF EXPOSING SOME PARTICULAR

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INSTANCES OF BLATANT GOVERNMENTAL CORRUPTION, THEY STUCK TO VAGUE (AND SAFE) GE RALIZATIONS ABOUT THE PREVALENCE OF COPRUPTION. THEIR MAIN TARGETS, THE GOVERNMENT'S CONDUCT OF THE CAMPAIGN AND THE BUDDHIST CHARTER, PROBABLY HAD LITTLE VOTER APPEAL.

5. FACTORS BEHIND THE DZU SHOWING:

A. DZU PUT THE PEACE ISSUE FORWARD IN THE RAWEST AND

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MOST UNCOMPLICATEDFORM. TO THE UNSOPHISTICATED AND THE WAR WEARY, THIS PROBABLY HAD A POWERFUL APPEAL.

B. DZU PROBABLY GOT MOST OF THE PROTEST VOTE. THOSE WHO WANTED TO REGISTER THEIR DISSATISFACTION WITH THE STATUS QUO WERE PROBABLY ATTRACTED BY DZU'S HARSH AND OFTEN CLEVER ATTACKS ON THIEU-KY AND THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT. MUCH OF THE ANTI-MILITARY VOTE THAT WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE GONE TO HUONG AND SUU WENT TO DZU BECAUSE HE WAS MORE VEHEMENTLY ANTI-MILITARY THAN THEY WERE. WITHIN THE PROTEST VOTE WAS PERHAPS AN ELEMENT OF HIDDEN ANTI-AMERICANISM, I.E. BY VOTING AGAINST THIEU-KY AND FOR PEACE. ALSO THERE MAY HAVE BEEN SOME DESIRE TO VOTE AGAINST THE "OLD" CIVILIAN CANDIDATES (SUU, HUONG, ETC.) AND FOR NEW BLOOD.
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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 6180
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 4105
CINCPAC
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2414

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C. THERE MAY HAVE BEEN SOME VIETCONG INFLUENCE AT WORK. IN III CORPS THERE IS CONSIDERABLE CONGRUENCE BETWEEN AREAS OF HEAVY VC INFLUENCE AND AREAS WHERE DZU PULLED A LARGE VOTE. DURING THE CAMPAIGN DZU TOLD [redacted] THAT HE HAD HEARD THE VIET CONG WERE TELLING PEOPLE TO VOTE OR HIM. WE HAVE VERY LITTLE TO GO ON HERE, HOWEVER, AND WE WILL

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NEED TO GET MORE INFORAMTION BEFORE HAZARDING ANY FIRM JUDGEMENT ON THE EXTENT OF VC SUPPORT FOR DZU.

D. TAN DAI VIET SUPPORT IS PROBABLY MORE IMPORTANT THAN PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT. DZU'S STRONG SHOWING IN QUANG NGAI, FOR EXAMPLE, IS EVIDENTLY THE RESULT OF TAI DAI VIET BACKING.

3. DZU SEEMED TO HAVE A VERY WELL FINANCED CAMPAIGN. THERE

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HAVE BEEN SOME ALLEGATIONS, AS YET QUITE UNCONFIRMD, THAT HE GOT HELP FROM THE FRENCH. THE SOURCE OF HIS CAMPAIGN FUNDS COULD HAVE BEEN HIS OWN BANK ACCOUNT AND THAT OF HIS BUSINESSMAN RUNNING MATE, HOWEVER.

6. ELECTION IRREGUARITIES

A. WE HAVE REPORTED PREVIOUSLY ON THE CHARGES OF PRESSURES AND UNFAIR CAMPAIGN TACTICS IN THE PERIOD PRECEDING THE ELECTION. MOST OF THESE PROVED UNSUBSTANTIATED OR A DIRECT RESULT OF THE FACT THAT THIEU AND KY ARE THE INCMBENTS AND USED THE NORMAL INCUMBENTS' ADVANTAGES FULLY.

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B. THE BALLOTING ITSELF WENT OFF WITH VIRTUALLY NO SIGNIFICANT IRREGULARITIES SO FAR AS WE ARE NOW AWARE. THE OBSERVERS WERE IN FACT MUCH IMPRESSED WITH THE CAREFUL AND STRICTLY HONEST PROCEDURES THAT THEY WITNESSED.

C. WE UNDERSTAND THAT DZU IS CHARGING THAT THE ELECTION WAS A "NATIONWIDE FRAUD", AND THAT HE WILL TRY TO GET THE ASSEMBLY TO DECLARE THE ELECTION INVALID. AS FAR AS WE KNOW, HOWEVER, HIS CHIEF CHARGE (IN ADDITION TO THOSE MADE FURING THE CAMPAIGN) IS THAT THERE WERE NOT ENOUGH BALLOTS AT SOME OF THE POLLING STATIONS. SHORTAGES OF SOME BALLOTS REPORTEDLY DID NOT DELAY BALLOTING AT SOME POLLING STATIONS, BUT ONLY TEMPORARILY.

D. IT SEEMS CLEAR NOW THAT UNLSS SOME NEW EVIDENCE OF EXTENSIVE FRAUD SHOULD BE UNCOVERED - WHICH WE CONSIDER UNLIKELY - THE ELECTION MUST BE CONSIDERED TO HAVE BEEN CLEAN. THE IRREGULARITIES OF WHICH WE ARE AWARE COULD NOT HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY ALERTED THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTION.

7. PROBABLE REACTIIONS

A. DZU'S STRONG SHOWING PLUS THE FACT THAT THIEU-KY GOT ONLY 35 PERCENT AND RAN RELATIVELY WELL IN THE CITIES AS

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WELL AS IN THE COUNTRY SIDE WILL TEND TO CONVINCE MANY SKEPTICS ERE THAT THE ELECTION WAS HONEST. WE ARE ALREADY BEGINNING TO GET THAT KIND OF REACTON.

B. AS NOTED IN PARA 5 ABOVE, DZU IS EVIDENTLY GOING TO MAKE AN EFFORT TO GET THEELECTION DECARED INVALID. HIS UNSAVORY PAST, HIS PERSONAL ATTACKS ON KY, HIS UNSTRUCTED PEACE APPEAL (WHICH THIEU-KY PROBABLY VIEW AS TANTAMOUNT TO SURRENDER TO THE VC), AND HIS PRESENT STANCE PROBABLY MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO CONTRIBUTE CONSTRUCTIVELY TO THE FORMATION OF THE NW GOVERNMENT. WE JUDGE THAT DZU CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT BE INCLUDED IN THE GOVERNMENT.

C. WITH THE FRONT RUNNING CIVILIAN THUS ELIMIATED, THE POSPECTS FOR A TRUE GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNION ARE UNDENIABLY REDUCED. AT THE SAME TIME, WE ARE INCLINED TO THINK THAT THE COUTOMCE OF THE ELECTION MAY ALSO MAKE IT EASIER FOR THIEU-KY TO PERSUADE THE OTHER CIVILIAN CANDIDATES O TAKE POSITIONS IN THE NEW CABINET. ON THE EVENING OF SEPT 3 VO LONG TRIEU IN FACT INTIMATED TO EMBOFF THAT HUONG HAS NOT

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REALLY CLOSED ON THE POSSIBILITY OF SERVING IN A THIEU-KY GOVERNMENT. MUCH WILL DEPEND ON HOW THIEU-KY APPROACH THE OTHER CIVILIAN CANDIDATES ON THIS MATTER. IT MAY ALSO DEPEND IN PART ON HOW FAST THEY ACT. WE UNDERSTAND THAT DZU HAS ALREADY SAID THA HE IS SEEKING THE HELP OF THE OTHER CIVILIAN CANDIDATES IN REJECTING THE ELECTION RESULTS.

D. THE MARGIN BY WHICH THIEU-KY WON THE ELECTION IS ADEQUATE AS A MANDAT, BUT IT IS CERTAINLY NOT OVERWHELMING. THE VOTE FOR DZU IN PARTICULAR SHOULD SUGGEST TO THIEU-KY THAT THEY NEED THE HELP OF CERTAIN OTHER CIVILIAN CANDIDATES IF THEY ARE TO HAVE SUFFICIENT POPULAR BACKING FOR THEIR GOVERNMENT.

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8. SIGNIFICANE F THE ELECTION

A. WE SHOULD NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE DIFFICULITIES UNDER WHICH THIS ELECTION WAS HELD. VIET NAM IS E NATION AT WAR, DIVIDED, SNDERDEVELOPED, AND WITH A VERY LONG TRADITION OF AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT. VC PROPAGANDA AND TERROR REACHED A NEW HIGH IN AN EFFORT TO DISRUPT AND DISCREDIT THE ELECTION. THE FLCTION WAS ALSO CARRIED OUT UNDER

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SUCH INTENSE INTERNATIONAL SCRUTINY THAT THE CANDIDATES WERE SOMETIMES TEMPTED TO PLAY TO WORLD OPINION MORE THAN TO THEIR OWN PEOPLE. (THIS IS THE PROBABLY REASON FOR THE GREAT EMPPASIS ON THE CONDUCT OF THE ELECTION AS AN ISSUE). CONSIDERING THE DIFFUCILITIES, THE ELECTION CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS A SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVENT.

B. THE ELECTION SHOULD ALSO BE VIEWED AS AN IMPORTANT STEP TOWARD GOVERNMENT Y LAW. OPPOSITION WAS TOLERATED TO A GREATER EXTEND THAN EVER BEFORE IN VIETNA. FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND OF SPEECH WERE UNPRECEDENTED. THIS WAS A MOST VALUABLE LESSON FOR ALL CONCERNED IN THE NEED TO TOLERATE DISSENT AND THE LIMITES WITHING WHICH RESPONSIBLE OPPOSITION CAN OPERATE.
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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 4106
CINCPAC
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2415

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C. THE ELECTION ALSO MARKS A FURTHER MOVE TOWARD CIVILIANIZATION OF THE GOVERNMENT. THIS PROCESS BEGAN WITH THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE DIRECTORATE LAST YEAR AND THE FORMATION OF THE PEOPLES ARMY CONGRESS; IT CONTINUED WITH THE ELECTION OF THE ASSEMBLY, AND THE WRITING OF THE CONSTITUTION. NOW THIEU AND KY WILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH AN IMPORTANT CIVLIAN ARM OF THE GOVERNMENT, THE NEW LEGISLATURE. WITH GOOD LUCK AND CAREFUL MAAGEMENT IT COULD SOON BE A WORKING CIVILIAN-MILITARY PARTNERSHIP UNDER THE CONSTITUTIONAL FRAME.

9. PROSPECTS:

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A. THE NEW REGIME WILL BE FACED BY MANY OLD AND NEW PROBLEMS. THE VC ARE STILL HERE, EVEN THOUGH THEIR CLAIM TO REPRESENT THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH VIETNAM IS MUCH REDUCED. CORRUPTION AND AUTHORITARIAN ATTITUDES ARE STILL EMBEDDED IN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE SOCIETY. THIEU-KY WILL STILL HAVE TO PROVE TO THEIR PEOPLE AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD THAT

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THE ELECTION WAS NOT MERELY A DEVICE TO LEGALIZE THEIR REGIME, THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS NOT MERELY "MORE OF THE SAME". IT WILL TAKE TIME AND CARE TO SHAKE DOWN THE NEW INSTITUTIONS. THE THIEU-KY RELATIONSHIP WILL HAVE TO BE WORKED OUT.

B. AN IMMEDIATE PROBLEM IS TO PREVENT DZU FROM STIR-RING UP A GREAT DEAL OF BITTERNESS. HE MUST HAVE A HEARING. AND HE MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO MAKE A MRTYR OF HIMSELF. THIS WILL INVOLVE PERSUADING THE GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE TO TAKE NO PREMATURE LEGAL ACTION AGAINST HIM. IT WILL ALSO INCLUDE AN EFFORT TO CONVINCE THIEU-KY THAT IT IS IN THEIR INTEPEST TO CONTINUE TO HAVE A FREE PRESS. MOST IMPORTANT, IT WILL AT THE OUTSET REQUIRE A GENUINE EFFORT BY THEM TO INCLUDE THE LEADING CIVILIAN CANDIDATES OR THEIR REPRESENTATIVES

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IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT. (WE WILL, OF COURSE, BE ATTEMPTING TO INFLUENCE ALL CONCERNED IN THAT DIRECTION.)

C. IF THERE ARE PLENTY OF OLD AND NEW PROBLEMS, THERE IS ALSO REASON FOR ENCOURAGEMENT. THE WAY IS AT LEAST OPEN FOR THE BUILDING OF A BROAD POLITICAL BASE FOR THE NEW GOVERMENT. A REAL DIALOGUE WITH A REAL LOYAL OPPOSITION IN THE NEW LEGISLATURE NOW APPEARS POSSIBLE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. MORE IMPORTANT, THE WAY IS MORE OPEN FOR PEACE. PEACE HAS BEEN OPENLY DISCUSSED IN A FREE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. THE NEW GOVERNMENT HAS THE POPULAR MANDATE AND THE PRESTIGE WHICH ONLY AN ELECTION COULD GIVE IT. HOEPFULLY THESE FACTS WILL BRING HANOI NEARERE TO ABANDONING ITS AGRESSION IN FAVOR OF NEGOTIATIONS.

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